

VZCZCXYZ0016
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBH #0721/01 3242030
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 202029Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0047
INFO EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 000721

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS
AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PASS TO AMEMBASSY GRENADA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/11/20
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [BF](#)
SUBJECT: BAHAMAS: REVIEW FOR SUSPENSION OF TITLE III OF THE LIBERTAD
ACT

REF: STATE 115416

DERIVED FROM: DSCG 05-1 B, D

1 (C) Response to reftel inquiries as follows:

-- Has the host country, in Post's opinion, worked to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba?

The Bahamas has worked to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba in the past, though much more could be done. Preliminary voting in the 2009 General Assembly indicates that traditional GCOB support for human rights in international fora has changed. The Bahamas has in the past typically voted with CARICOM and the Non-Aligned Movement in international fora and continues to oppose the U.S. embargo of Cuba.

--Has the host country made public statements or undertaken other governmental actions, such as resolutions in national assemblies condemning human rights abuses in Cuba; or actions in support of civil society in Cuba through the host country's diplomatic missions or other fora?

No. The Bahamas has not made recent public statements condemning human rights abuses in Cuba. The Bahamas justifies its relations with Cuba by citing the need to provide consular services, to address bilateral migration issues, and to promote trade and travel. The Bahamian government has also noted the need for close relations to avoid repetition of incidents such as the 1980 sinking by Cuban forces of a Bahamian Defense Force vessel resulting in the deaths of several Bahamian sailors. Like the U.S., the Bahamian government works with Cuba to combat drug and migrant trafficking. The GCOB sees a pragmatic need to maintain a relationship with Cuba to manage repatriation and any concomitant international complications.

-- Have there been any high-level diplomatic visits between Cuba and the host country in the past six months?

In July a delegation of technical experts from various GCOB ministries met in Cuba to discuss maritime boundaries. Other areas discussed included cooperation in search and rescue, combating illegal migrant and drug trafficking, maritime scientific research, and management of trans-boundary resources. In November, the Bahamas Chamber of Commerce traveled to Cuba for their 27th Annual

Trade Fair. Representatives from both countries discussed investment opportunities and ways to steel their economies against the global recession. The Bahamas expressed optimism that trade opportunities with Cuba would be more available as the Cuban economy liberalizes.

-- What is the nature of investments (and names, if known) that host country businesses have in Cuba?

Direct Bahamian investment in Cuba is minimal given The Bahamas' exchange controls, limited scope for international investment among Bahamian businesses, and the country's economic dependence on the United States. Third country investment in Cuba via Bahamian financial institutions is likely, but unknown. However, there is a general feeling among the private sector that the U.S. will relax its trade and investment policies toward Cuba. In anticipation of this and in an effort to link tourism markets, the Cuban and Bahamas Chambers of Commerce have conducted trade missions into The Bahamas and Cuba, respectively.

-- Are there any bilateral trade agreements or other cooperative agreements between host country and Cuba?

Yes. The Bahamas and Cuba have an Economic and Technical Agreement that promotes trade and investment, advocates for technical information exchanges and establishes joint cooperation programs. It established a Cuba-Bahamas Joint Commission for technical

cooperation to implement a Framework Agreement on health and education projects. Pending agreements include: Collaborate in the field of Plant Quarantine and Plant Protection with the Ministry of Agriculture; and Animal Quarantine Collaboration and Control/Eradication of Animal Diseases

-- Are there any exchange programs between host country and Cuba, including but not limited to: scholarships for host country nationals to study in Cuba; Cuban-paid medical travel for host country nationals; and Cuban doctors working in the host country?

In June the Cuban government granted 24 scholarships for Bahamian high school students to pursue careers as doctors, engineers and teachers. Approximately 70 students applied for the scholarships through the Embassy of Cuba in The Bahamas. In September 2006, an Agreement of Specialty Teachers between the Ministry of Education, the Latin American and Caribbean Pedagogical Institute and the Republic of Cuba was signed. This agreement allows for the recruitment of Cuban teachers in the public school system in The Bahamas. From 2005-2006 and From 2007-2009, The Bahamas and Cuba entered into a verbal agreement known as "Operation Miracle-Eye Programme" that allowed individuals with visual disorders and impairments to seek free medical assistance from Cuba. Informally, Cuban doctors are actively recruited to practice medicine in The Bahamas. According to the GCOB, approximately 20,000 Bahamians visit Cuba each year and approximately 150 Bahamian students study in Cuba on scholarship.

ZUNIGA-BROWN